

VOL. 5, NO. 3—FEBRUARY 2005

SCHOOLSCAPES

WORKING TOGETHER
TO INSTRUCT, SOCIALIZE AND PROVIDE QUALIFICATIONS



**WE THANK
YOU!**

Reach for
your **Dreams**

Québec 

Teaching A Story from the Heart

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Louise Ménard

By Francine Payette

s Teacher Appreciation Week gets underway, I am turning the page on a love story that began in a Montréal elementary school in 1963. At the time, I was teaching new Canadians, as they were then called. Students were taught French in the mornings, English in the afternoons and had one Italian lesson a day. This was the era of the school inspector, who would come and examine our *class preparation* book. At that time, preparation was limited to naming the subjects and their corresponding textbook pages, indicating the time allocated to each one and the list of lessons and homework assignments. The inspector in my district also gave students a day off from homework if they all had their rosaries with them. Each teacher in my school even kept a box full of rosaries to hand out to students just before his visit. It was a little stratagem that put big smiles on students' faces when they proclaimed in unison, "Good morning, Mr. Inspector!"

Yet it was also at this time that working committees were being set up in the wake of the Parent Commission, and I had the privilege of participating, in a modest way, in the beginnings of the democratization of our education system. Thus it is with great satisfaction that I look back, some 40 years later, on the work that teachers have accomplished. While I believe that teachers' focus has always been on the students, I consider that their collective ability to help students apply their knowledge and engage in lifelong learning continues to grow.

To all those who have just joined their school teams, I would like to wish you a career as gratifying as the one I have had working with young people and dynamic colleagues. This issue of *Schoolscapes* presents several inspiring teachers, such as Louise Ménard, who has harnessed technology on behalf of student learning, in the process building learning communities that are growing ever stronger.

Happy Teacher Appreciation Week!



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Interviews by Pascale Sauvé

In honour of Teacher Appreciation Week, *Schoolscapes* asked young people to designate those who most influenced them in school. Their testimonies are a warm tribute to the remarkable teachers whom they were fortunate to encounter during their studies. These teachers represent thousands of others who, like you, communicate their enthusiasm to their students every day. Thank you for being there!

Mathieu

Secondary V, international education program



"I think of Lorraine Filiatrault, who taught me in fifth grade. She had an approach different from that of other teachers. She gave us a whole bunch of tricks for remembering grammar rules and mathematical concepts, and I still remember them today! Even though I'm now in Secondary V, I still use them. In class we had to address her formally and she was pretty strict, but she was also really nice. There was a lot of respect between her and the students. We paid attention in class, everything went well, and everyone liked her. When someone believes in you, it makes you want to do more."

Nilmini

Secondary V, international education program



"I'd like to thank Luc, the teacher of my welcoming class. It was he who, along with the principal, took steps to get me into the regular stream. He did it because he knew I could succeed and because he believed in me. There was also a math teacher, Mr. Lessard, who had a strong influence on me. He explained things so many times. If someone didn't understand, he started again in a different way, and he did this as many times as it took for everyone to understand. He really made himself available to us. I did so well on my ministry exam that year! And it was thanks to him. He worked hard for us, to make sure we'd succeed. That's quite rare. Then there was one of my French teachers, who was our project resource person in the international education program. She was great. She kept encouraging me. She believed in me, which helped me a lot. When you see these people working so hard for you, you don't want to give up."

Sarah

Secondary Cycle One, sports/study program



"I'll always remember Mrs. Kinton. It was thanks to her that I graduated from elementary school. She helped me so much, especially in French, where I'm not very good. And she was fun. And close to us. She was active, too, and, since I'm like that, we got along well. She didn't just sit on her chair all day long, talking at us. With her, things really moved!"

Mihai

Secondary Cycle One



"I take my hat off to my French teacher, Mrs. Lévesque. I like her as a teacher because she always has good ideas for our projects and has a way of making activities interesting. She explains things well, too. Plus, she always stays calm, even when we get a bit wild. But she can be strict! She's fair with us and we learn a lot, it's good."

Gabrielle

Secondary Cycle Two, arts concentration



"Several people had an impact on me. I had one elementary school teacher named Line who had a way of motivating students, and was very interested in us. She taught art, and you could feel that she really liked what she did. She was always there if we had questions, if we were having trouble at school or personal problems. It's important for your self-esteem to know that someone is there for you. There was also Dominic Chagnon, my geography teacher in Secondary I. I'm not the only one who really liked him. The way he taught made us pay attention in class. Everything was interesting. You could tell that

he liked what he did, he was passionate about it. He was always ready to help us, gave remedial periods, prepared documents for us, etc. Success in school was very important to him. You can feel it when someone has a passion for what they do. This year, I'm really impressed by my visual arts teacher, Pauline Gingras. She has an incredible sense of humour; she's always smiling. She's very special—I don't know many teachers with as much energy! When she walks into the room, the whole class lights up. It's amazing. It makes all the difference when you have motivated teachers."

Vicky

Accès Nord program



"Catherine Carrière made a difference for me. She's been my teacher for two years now in the Accès Nord program. She's the one who got me motivated. She has always supported, encouraged and helped me. When I need advice, she's there. It makes me want to continue. I feel like with her I will succeed."

Nicolas

Enrolled in the DVS program at the steel trades school



"I think of Normand Alexander, who currently teaches me in the DVS program. Teaching wasn't his first career choice. He worked in construction but, after several accidents, went into teaching. He didn't spend much time in school, and found himself on the job market when he was quite young. Now he's taking university courses to be a teacher. What I like is that he knows what he's doing, he's confident. We learn things, but it doesn't feel like we're at school. The classes are fun. I feel safe. With him, I know that when the time comes for me to enter the job market, I'll be ready."

Sonia

Enrolled in the DVS program in carpentry/woodworking



"France Foley, a social worker at the adult education centre I attended, was someone who had a big impact on my educational path. I had dropped out several times, and then I went back to school to try and get at least a basic education. At the time, things weren't going very well in my personal life. This person was important to me because she was there all the times I needed it. She was like a personal diary for me—I wasn't afraid to talk to her. I would leave her office full of energy. If she hadn't been there, I don't know if I would have persevered. I'll always remember her."

Jean-Philippe

End of Elementary Cycle Three



"There was Marie-Claude Giguère, in Grade 4. I liked the projects she suggested. Once, we became the teachers. It was like an internship. We had to teach other students. It was really special, and fun. There was also a project on countries. My mother's from Australia, so I learned more about the country. Miss Giguère motivated me. There was also someone called Carole, she was a substitute in my Grade 3 class. She hatched baby chicks and butterflies in class. It was great!"

Tania

End of Elementary Cycle Three



"The teacher who really had an impact on me was Daniel Arseneault, in Grade 4. He had such a different way of showing us the material. For example, to teach us fractions he pretended he was a cook making pizzas. He made us laugh. Before him, I found history and geography complicated and I wasn't really interested, but with him it was different. He did these sketches, which made us listen and learn more. We laughed a lot. It was his way of doing things that made it interesting. He was a really good teacher. The year went by so

fast! I was sad to leave at the end of it. There was also Danielle Descaries, in Grade 5. She came on Wednesdays to teach history and geography, science and technology and geometry. She had good ideas. For example, we chose historical figures and recreated their lives. I was a midwife. We had to find information about the time, their clothing, etc., and present our character. I found her way of teaching us very stimulating."

Marie-Laurence

Enrolled in double DCS program in natural and social sciences, OptiMonde option



"I remember my Grade 1 teacher, Richard Angeleru. He was fantastic. Almost every week, he dressed up. He always presented these incredible scenarios. We had a mail system to write notes to each other, and he wrote us notes too. We had a reading corner in the classroom with sofas. He made us brush our teeth after lunch. He also had a very strong environmental sense. Even in Grade 1, he showed us how to build composters! All these little things made going to school special. You could tell he really enjoyed life! He created a world, a special universe. He put on a play with all the kids from kindergarten to Grade 6. He wrote the play, directed it and created the costumes. He also had us write books and novels. They each had about six lines. We drew book covers, came up with titles and sold them at a book fair. Then we used the money we collected to buy books for our reading corner. We were really motivated!"

Jean-Michel

CEGEP, first year in music program (jazz piano)



"I had a great music teacher in secondary school: Serge Thibault. He was such a stimulating teacher, I'll always remember him. He was always involved in extracurricular activities; he created a whole bunch of new programs in the school. He introduced us to different styles of music. He was a career musician, and knew how to communicate his passion for music. He had a way of creating really dynamic groups—we were really happy to be there! That teacher certainly encouraged me to continue in music."

Julien

Nursing assistant after earning an SSD and a DVS in nursing



"Carole Cloutier, who taught me in the DVS program, really had an influence on my progress. It's not just that she was a good teacher; she was there for the students. We could talk to her. She listened to our problems, whether they were school-related or personal. I was going through a difficult period at the time. She was above all a nurse, so she knew how to help me with what I was

going through. She really made my education easier and gave me the desire to continue; unlike other people, she saw my true potential. She pushed me to continue and to do the best I could. She's no doubt part of the reason that I succeeded."

Valentine

Chef for a catering service after earning a bachelor's degree in chemistry and a DVS in cooking



"Raymond Vanasse, a chemistry teacher in Secondary V, was really fantastic. I got to know him better because we did science fairs together. He was so involved! He gave a lot of his time outside class hours, and he took us to see what went on inside companies. He was there to support me, to give me a push. Thanks to him, I carried out projects that I never thought I could do."

Andréanne

Recruitment manager in a placement agency after earning a bachelor's degree in industrial relations



"I remember Martine Talbot, my mathematics teacher in Secondary III and, later, school principal. I've always admired her. Her teaching was really well adapted to my way of learning. She explained well, making sure I understood. That year, I did incredibly well in mathematics, better than ever in fact. I always found her sympathetic and open, and she had us participate. She was always smiling and interested in how we were. Every student was important to her. In that class, I was motivated, and did very well. There was also H  l  ne, the special education teacher who worked with me throughout most of secondary school. She was very open to our problems and wanted to help us. She taught us all kinds of tricks, some of them really off-the-wall, just to help us remember things and get the material into our brains! People like this really made a difference." ❧

Through Young Eyes



The video *Le regard des jeunes* (Through Young Eyes), presented at the November provincial meeting on the education reform, is now available online and in school boards. The 28-minute video describes the educational paths of 15 young people aged 11 to 24. Through eloquent testimony, these young people share their views on school, their interests, their doubts and their professional ambitions. Each has followed a different path, yet they all aspire to the same goal: to realize their dreams, to find the path that is right for them and to succeed.

This video was a springboard for the first workshop at the provincial meeting, designed to generate discussion and reflection on how to better adapt our organizations to young people's needs. The video document is now available to others who would like to use it in their schools and organizations. In addition to the 28 minutes presented at the provincial meeting, the DVD version contains excerpts grouped under the following themes:

- Diversity of student profiles
- Dreams
- Guidance role of the school
- Motivation
- Role of school professionals
- Transition to secondary school
- Projects
- Extracurricular activities

The video can be viewed online at www.meq.gouv.qc.ca, where you will also find the worksheet that participants used in the workshop that followed the video presentation on November 2. Copies of the video have been sent to school boards as well to help them make use of this tool.

How do teachers see their role on the governing board? What is their mandate? What are their observations? Members of the governing board for Saint-Paul-de-la-Croix elementary school, Commission scolaire de la Pointe-de-l'Île, share their views.

Isabelle Goyette

**Elementary Cycle One teacher
and member of the governing board
for three years**

"What I find interesting about the governing board is being able to meet parents, and getting to understand each person's role. We come to know and understand one another. Our group dynamic is quite good, and the atmosphere is very friendly and respectful. We take the time to listen to one another, and each person's opinion is taken into consideration. It's very enriching for everyone.

"This year, we're very organized at our school. Each month there's a general assembly with all staff members and administrators. Then teachers get together among themselves to discuss and agree on certain points. This is followed by another general meeting in which we apprise the administration of our proposals, some of which are then presented to the governing board. This consultation process familiarizes us with our colleagues' opinions, which enables us to better represent them. Moreover, because we're well prepared, we have solid arguments that we can use to defend and discuss our ideas.

"When I came to the school three years ago, I immediately got involved in the governing board. I thought it was an excellent way to get to know the community, to feel the pulse of the school and the neighbourhood. It has been a very positive experience. Next year I will pass the torch to someone else. After three years, I think I've done my part.

"At the moment, there are just two teachers on the governing board, even though the law provides for more. There are still some vacant seats. These are volunteer positions, meetings are held at night and one's involvement is not recognized in one's job description; so not many people want to get involved. I can understand that some teachers see this task as a burden. But our presence on the governing board is very important. We need to find ways to encourage both teachers and parents to participate.

"I'm really happy to have had this experience. I always come back from the assemblies pleased with the work accomplished. It's very gratifying to know that you've done your part to help improve the school."



Isabelle Goyette

"What I find interesting about the governing board is being able to meet parents, and getting to understand each person's role. We come to know and understand one another."

Francine Proulx

**Elementary Cycle Three teacher
and member of the governing board
for six years**

"What the governing board does is important because it's the connection between parents and teachers. Regular discussion builds mutual understanding, so our meetings enable parents to raise questions, to be better informed and to better understand the choices we make. For us as teachers, it's a chance to express our opinions and to make our views known. The meetings are held in a spirit of great mutual respect.

"For the past few years, the atmosphere surrounding the governing board has been very pleasant. I think the atmosphere can vary greatly depending on who is there. When the members understand that they are there to improve the school and not to defend their personal interests, everything runs smoothly.

"I would say that being a member of the governing board is also a way of making yourself known. You build relationships with parents, the community and even the students. You acquire credibility in the community. When a child comes into your classroom, there has already been a first contact.

"I live very close to here. This is the school where I work, in my neighbourhood, my community. It's important for me to get

involved and to participate. On the governing board we work together for the school and for the well-being of the children. So it's really important for everyone to do their part."

Carole Favron

School principal for three years

"The members of the governing board have to make decisions about various matters. The board defines the broad orientations of the school, and the members have the power to approve or reject the proposals they receive. If a proposal is refused, we have to go back and redo our homework.

"When we come before the governing board, we're always well prepared. We know in advance the points that will be on the agenda for the meeting. This gives everyone time to think about and discuss them with the people they represent.

"It should be said that governing boards are relatively new, and I don't think we have completely integrated them yet. The law is complex and everyone has their own interpretation of it. It's important to come to a common understanding. Even now, we continue to adjust and improve procedures from one year to the next.

"One important point to remember is that the governing board allows parents to express themselves and get informed.

As teachers and administrators, we work in the school every day, but we realize that it's not always easy for people outside to understand what is going on. For example, over the last two years, we've worked a lot on the school's educational project. We had to integrate it into our daily practices, but we also had to explain it to parents. It's important to make information as accessible as possible so that everyone can participate fully."

Governing Board Functions and Powers

The governing board is vested with functions and powers to ensure that schools draw on the expertise of all persons having an interest in education.

These functions and powers relate to the educational project, student supervision policies, rules of conduct, application of the *Basic school regulation*, subject-time allocation, use of facilities, etc. The governing board's decisions must always be made in the best interest of the students.

For more information
on governing boards, visit:
<www.meq.gouv.qc.ca>



Francine Proulx



Carole Favron

EXCHANGING AND LEARNING

A meeting of minds

By Pascale Sauvé

For the Successful Induction of New Teachers

May 2004 witnessed a first in the world of Québec education: a conference on teacher induction. Nearly 550 participants from all backgrounds came together over two days to reflect on current teaching conditions and to determine the best means to employ to ensure that young teachers enjoy a successful start to their teaching careers.

Adopting the theme of "action for successful induction," the conference was initiated by the Comité d'orientation de la formation du personnel enseignant (COFPE) and the Centre de recherche interuniversitaire sur la formation et la profession enseignante (CRIFPE). It received support from the Ministère de l'Éducation (MEQ) as well as from several other organizations. This first conference was hosted by the Commission scolaire de Laval (CSDL).

Lorraine Lamoureux, the COFPE chair and the head of practicum, induction and continuing education for teachers at the CSDL, welcomed participants to this lively event. "We hope," she said, "that this conference will give you a chance to discover and share strategies conducive to the induction of new teachers into your respective schools and school boards."

An issue of concern

The time was ripe for a conference on this issue, which is of growing concern to the education community. Québec is currently experiencing the biggest teacher turnover it has seen for a long time, as large numbers of experienced teachers head for retirement. And even though student enrolment is declining, restructuring brought on by the education reform has led to an increase in the number of teaching positions over the last few years. Schools across the province have seen a massive influx of young teachers.

Québec is currently in a position which requires that it attract and train quality teachers. But it must also work to keep them. At the moment, roughly 25 per cent of young teachers abandon their teaching careers within five years of starting. This statistic gives us much food for thought.

Young teachers work under what are often very discouraging conditions of difficult class management, isolation, lack of job security, repeated supply teaching, etc. "At the moment, roughly 30 per cent of teachers still have precarious status and wait, on average, 7 to 10 years to obtain permanent status," said Maurice Tardif, director of CRIFPE and a professor at the Université de Montréal. Conditions for new arrivals are therefore far from ideal.

Long days

A video entitled "Le maelström va passer" featured a dozen teachers, each with less than six years of experience, discussing their experiences. They all agreed that their entry into the profession had not been easy and that the situation was still difficult. The first few days were the most taxing: learning about the students, the school and their new colleagues, getting organized, planning their classes, adapting to the reality of the field. Most were parachuted into a class (as a regular or a supply teacher) without any warning, preparation, support or welcome. Some even arrived at the school the same day as the students, or on the day of the parent-teacher meetings! They felt panic and extreme anxiety.

"For me, the first 45 days were easiest," one teacher admitted, "but then it became more difficult. Once the adrenaline rush was over, I realized the scope of my task: five different lesson plans to prepare in subjects for which I hadn't been trained. That's when reality hit me full force." Most teachers had similar experiences: scattered tasks in grade levels or subjects for which they hadn't been trained, covering several schools, often working as supply teachers, changing schools or cycles from one year to the next. They had no sense of belonging or stability. They tried to make a place for themselves and prove themselves in any way they could, by getting involved and participating in various activities. They were fighting for survival.

What do they need? Ideally, support, guidance, recognition and a word of encouragement now and then. "When you arrive at a new school and you don't know anyone, and no one offers any help, you feel as if you don't belong there. You lose your self-confidence and you start doubting your abilities," said one participant. "We're apprentices; we need a guide or a mentor," another explained. "School administrators, human resources and the school board all have a role to play in supporting new teachers." They say that even a 'hello' or a few minutes to explain the rules or show them around the school would make all the difference.

They recognize, however, that new teachers also have a role to play. "We may be lacking help, but we also have to learn to open up," said one young teacher. "When we start, we're often very closed, because we're afraid of being judged. We want to be accepted. So we don't talk about our problems."

For a successful transition

The conference demonstrated that more and more schools and universities are concerned about teacher induction. Numerous studies on the subject have been conducted in the last few years, some school boards have set up teacher induction programs, and schools are looking at how to improve the situation. As demonstrated by the 60 workshops offered during the two-day conference, people are seeking solutions.

Yet there is still a long way to go to ensure a successful entry of new teachers into the profession. Retaining quality and competent teachers will require rethinking teacher induction mechanisms.

At the end of these two days of reflection and discussion, several conditions conducive to teacher induction were identified. All parties (the MEQ, universities, school boards, teachers and unions) must work together to develop

strategies and foster cohesiveness across all of the sectors concerned. There is a consensus that we need to develop welcoming strategies in schools, promote continuing education, structure support and guidance, train mentors, foster team work, provide occasions for meeting and sharing, facilitate communication between new and experienced teachers, create a social climate conducive to induction and provide not only pedagogical but also moral support for new teachers. New teachers, meanwhile, feel they need to learn how to carve out a place for themselves in schools, how to ask for help, to be more open to talking to others and to take care of themselves in order to maintain a healthy balance.

To find out more about the conference, visit the Web site at:
<<http://fad.cslaval.qc.ca/colloqueip>>



At the moment, roughly 25% of young teachers in Québec abandon their teaching careers within five years of starting. This statistic gives us much food for thought.

Émile Lévesque, COPE, first-time teacher
at Collège de la Gaspésie, 2001-2002
Photo: Michel Gauthier, 1999, 2001

The History and Future of the Teaching Profession

What was it like for new teachers coming into the school system in the past? In the opening address to the conference on teacher induction, Maurice Tardif, director of the Centre de recherche interuniversitaire sur la formation et la profession enseignante (CRIFPE) and a professor at the Université de Montréal, took listeners on a journey back in time.

When we talk of teacher induction, we're looking to the future," said Tardif. "We're thinking about the conditions in which young teachers will enter the profession. This is the first time in Québec that this question is being addressed at a conference in such a serious way. And yet, it's an old problem! It's a good idea to take a step back and look at how teacher induction has taken place at different times and how it takes place today, to find the common threads that could lead to solutions."

Teacher induction, Tardif believes, is a process that begins the moment a person chooses his or her career and continues until he or she obtains a permanent position. "There are three factors to consider along the way: the nature of the profession, its culture and value system, and how it welcomes new members." Tardif used these three elements to conduct his analysis and to paint a picture of four significant periods in the teaching profession.

Teaching before the 1950s

It is 1938 and Marie, a young woman from the country, wants to teach at a range school. So she obtains a certificate of good conduct from her parish priest and learns to work hard for

little money. "Before the 1950s, 70 per cent of schools in the province were one-room schoolhouses, and most were in rural areas," Tardif reminded his audience. "One teacher taught everything to everybody."

What is Marie getting herself into? At that time, Tardif reminds us, people scorned and looked down on teaching. Marie's working conditions are terrible: she is underpaid, has no job security and can be dismissed at will. She has little education, secondary school at most. As Tardif explained, "it was a precarious job that many women did while waiting to get married. Those in charge looked for female workers exhibiting both docility and mobility." It was easy to become a teacher at the time because it wasn't the kind of job that people coveted. There was a high turnover. "Since training was short or nonexistent, anyone could be hired, depending on the need and budget. Teachers could be easily replaced."

But, despite the dire working conditions, job expectations were high. "It followed the religious model, it was considered a vocation: you couldn't teach just to earn a salary, you had to espouse the model of the religious communities and devote yourself



Teacher induction is a process that begins the moment a person chooses his or her career and continues until he or she obtains a permanent position.

Maurice Tardif, director of the Centre de recherche interuniversitaire sur la formation et la profession enseignante (CRIFPE) and a professor at the Université de Montréal.

wholeheartedly to your trade," Tardif explained. "The virtues of teachers were not basic teaching competencies, but moral virtues such as obedience. The teacher's values, attitudes and practices were watched by the entire village; she had to be careful." As a representative of adult society and the traditional authorities, her mandate was to form Catholic Québec citizens.

(Most English schools were run by the Protestant authorities. Yet, according to Tino Bordonaro, assistant professor in the McGill University Faculty of Education, despite the philosophical differences between the two systems, conditions for elementary school teachers were similar: "Her responsibilities were very domestic: she had to maintain the schoolhouse and discipline the children," said Bordonaro.)

How would Marie have been welcomed into the profession? At the time there was no control over the recruitment of new teachers. "There were no welcoming mechanisms. You learned your trade on the job, by doing it. You did the best you could with the means you had. You were usually alone in the school, with no one to support or supervise you. At the time, moreover, people were not open to new things. They valued the observance of routines and respect for established authority. The important thing was to maintain control over your class; what students actually learned was of secondary importance."

From 1950 to 1980

It is 1969 and Pierre, a Montreal native, wants to become a French teacher at a new comprehensive school. He is recruited directly from university, his career assured. "In those years, we saw a movement of the population toward the cities and the development of secondary schools in Québec. This opened the way for men to go into teaching."

The period from 1950 to 1980 is sometimes called the "glorious thirties" of the teaching profession. The number of schools increased, comprehensive schools were created and compulsory schooling was introduced. Schools benefited from the sharp demographic rise represented by the "baby boomer" generation. The economy was going strong, the welfare state came into being and the government invested in education. Thousands of teachers were hired. "This is when teaching became recognized and valued as a profession," said Tardif. "It became a stable job for both men and women. Starting in the 1950s, teaching became a respectable profession, and many people decided to devote themselves to it, to make it their career." This movement led to a considerable increase in salaries and better working conditions. At the same time, the profession became unionized, and was no longer subject to arbitrary rule. Many people were attracted by what it had to offer.

It was at this time that teacher education was transferred from teacher-training schools to university. It was also expanded. "By the same token, this training became a form of protection for teachers, because not just anyone could teach anymore."

This also marked the departure from the Christian worldview. Teachers now saw themselves as agents of change, identifying with the values of the Quiet Revolution—democracy, equality and respect for diversity. Professional enthusiasm was high. There was a feeling that anything was possible and the conditions were right for change: the modern education system was being built. "A new teacher-student relationship was also taking shape," said Tardif. "The authoritarian view began to recede: it was now believed that a teacher shouldn't just control his or her students, but guide them in their learning and their development. People began to think about models for the transmission of knowledge."

But one thing that did not change was the welcome reserved for new teachers. "The entry process became more standardized and controlled, but the welcoming conditions were the same. Once again, teacher induction was very informal. If someone was there to help you, it was purely because they decided to do so of their own accord. Even in this golden age of teaching there were never any official welcoming practices or mechanisms."



"If we cannot support our teachers, how can we expect them to support our children and adolescents?"

The 1980s and 1990s

Born in a Montreal suburb, Nancy wants to become a special education teacher. She understands that there are no more permanent teaching positions. She will have to learn to work on contract.

Over these two decades, the student population stagnates and even decreases. Moreover, the student population becomes increasingly heterogeneous because the Quiet Revolution has opened schools up to everyone without exception. Students come from a variety of social backgrounds, cultures and ethnicities, and have very diverse family, learning and motivational profiles. The population as a whole declines, becoming fragmented. Permanent positions close, and for quite some time. Job insecurity becomes endemic, affecting roughly 40 per cent of teachers by the 90s.

"Educators also witnessed a bureaucratization of the teaching profession," said Tardif. "It was a time of programs with thousands of objectives, and with each task timed to the minute. In other words, teaching was seen as a technician's job, which led to a drop in the prestige of teaching and schools."

This time also witnessed a decline in the values of modern education. New teachers' roles became vaguer as they were confronted with a variety of value systems and cultures. "We saw the emergence of new values—flexibility, mobility, efficiency and adaptation—stemming from the corporate sector. These

made their way into the world of education. In short, if you wanted to survive, you had to prove that you were resourceful and that you were the best!"

Thus, old and new teachers worked in two different labour systems, one characterized by permanent status and the other by job insecurity. Such insecurity became a long-term condition, with some teachers waiting up to 15 years to get tenure. "The welcoming process remained informal. Why set up welcoming mechanisms and spend money to help young teachers who are likely to leave at any moment? In this context, little or no welcome was perfectly normal and logical."

Becoming a teacher today

What awaits new teachers today? "We know that recruitment has resumed, but it's difficult to predict what will happen in the future," said Tardif. "Are we moving toward massive recruitment or a reduction in the number of teaching positions? What options are there for a career in teaching? We don't know."

Teacher education programs have expanded: students must now complete a four-year bachelor's program, including 700 hours of field experience. "Those who undertake this process must realize that it is a very big investment, and the government and the unions have a responsibility to make sure this investment is supported and rewarded," Tardif said.

The work awaiting new teachers has become more demanding and complex. "Teaching is

more difficult today than it was 25 or 40 years ago. The students are different, they are being influenced from all sides, their problems are more complex and the social support has never been weaker. Moreover, teachers are more and more isolated in their work. At the same time, we are entering a significant phase of reform that will have a profound impact on school curricula—another major challenge awaiting new teachers."

Teachers are entering a postmodern culture, one in which their role has become multifaceted and in which they have become akin to professional chameleons. Tardif believes teachers will face increased pressure to produce results. "They are entering a movement toward professionalization intended to secure recognition for them as neither technicians nor experts, but as practitioners capable of reflecting on their practices, and capable of innovation and argumentation."

"I hope you will all receive better welcomes than your predecessors," Tardif concluded. "This conference attests to the collective concerns of the education community. However, there is still no real culture of support for young teachers. I hope that this reflection undertaken together will mark the beginning of this culture of support, because teaching is the profession of Québec society's future. If we cannot support our teachers, how can we expect them to support our children and adolescents?" ❖



By Eve Krakow

Supporting New Teachers

According to a recent study, new teachers find that field experience is what best prepares them for their job. But even with 700 hours built into initial teacher education programs, most teachers have a very tough first year. According to Spencer Boudreau, Associate Dean at the McGill Faculty of Education, what's needed is a support and mentoring structure at the school level.

pencer Boudreau is the Associate Dean for Teaching, Learning and Students in the McGill Faculty of Education. His own teaching career began in 1968 in a private French secondary school. A few years later, he took a job teaching at MacDonald Cartier in St. Hubert—a public English secondary school with 3 800 students.

"My survival in my first year was due to team teaching," he recalls. "I teamed up with another teacher and we worked together." He was hired in October—"talk about teacher induction! Plus, all the difficult classes with very needy kids were left for the newly hired."

Thirty-five years later, Boudreau's experience is still a valid reflection of what new teachers go through today. "They're the youngest, the least experienced and have the fewest resources; yet, because of their lack of seniority, they're given the most difficult schedules and students."

Research findings

Boudreau recently collaborated on a study led by Anthony Paré and Cathrine LeMaistre, two of his colleagues in the McGill Faculty of

Education. The goal was to find out what prepares students best for their profession. They looked at physical therapy, occupational therapy, social work and teaching. As a director of teaching practicums, Boudreau was involved in interviewing teachers for the study.

"The findings among teachers were very clear," said Boudreau. He quoted one respondent, who said that "student teaching was the single most valuable preparation offered by the education faculty."

Boudreau pointed out that a successful practicum for teachers must have clearly articulated learning expectations, appropriate placement, supportive supervisors, well-prepared candidates and, most importantly, willing, informed and supportive cooperating teachers.

Heavy demands

"The demands on our students are great," says Boudreau. They need to be computer-savvy and bilingual and be able to cope with students from split families, face demanding parents and manage an inclusive classroom—something even experienced teachers find difficult.

A successful practicum for teachers must have clearly articulated learning expectations, appropriate placement, supportive supervisors, well-prepared candidates and, most importantly, willing, informed and supportive cooperating teachers.

"With regard to new or student teachers, teachers sometimes say 'they can't do this, they can't do that, and they don't know this, they don't know that.' But what other profession has the expectation that the graduate will be at the same level as an experienced teacher from day one?"

Many of the teachers surveyed in the study described their first year as a lonely time. "They felt isolated, and they didn't feel other teachers always shared their resources." In their second year, teachers said, "I'm not going to be a superhero. Now I do what I can and don't expect more than I can do."

Fixing the problem

What's needed, Boudreau says, is an organized mentoring system for new teachers, at the school level.¹ "When asked who they were mostly likely to go to for help, new teachers said: experienced teachers. Not their education professors. Not the school principal."

In the U.K., Boudreau noted, mentoring teachers are given some release time, and first-year teachers are not given a full

workload. "In Québec, there's no such release time, so we have to be realistic," Boudreau admits. "But is there no one among senior teachers who would be willing to act as a mentor?" He suggests that principals could approach their staff to find teachers who would be willing to give new teachers advice, direct them to the proper resources or help them deal with the problems they encounter.

He also suggests creating opportunities for new teachers to meet regularly and discuss the challenges they're facing. "One of our focus groups said, 'We meet at the Cage-aux-Sports over a beer, and it really helps.'" Perhaps meetings could be arranged with senior teachers. "New teachers often feel too intimidated to approach other teachers, because they see they're so busy."

Making progress

"We are starting to pay attention to this situation in Québec," Boudreau said. As examples, he cited work being done by Lorraine Lamoureux at the Commission scolaire de Laval, as well as the recent conference on teacher induction.

"There's no doubt that teaching is a very demanding profession," he continued. "When anything goes wrong in society—when kids can't read or don't have social skills—there's a tendency to blame the schools." But at the same time, when we have a really good teacher, we remember them always. Boudreau recently went back with his brother to visit one of his teachers in New Brunswick, a nun who is now in her 90s. "My brother, a big business man, had tears in his eyes. What other profession touches us in that way?"

Editors note: We invite you to read the article "A Mentoring Model," on pages 16 and 17, which discusses a promising initiative.



Sponsor donates awards to the author for teaching excellence and leadership in the field of education.

"With regard to new or student teachers, teachers sometimes say 'they can't do this, they can't do that, and they don't know this, they don't know that.' But what other profession has the expectation that the graduate will be at the same level as an experienced teacher from day one?"

he mentorship project, which began in mid-October, is intended specifically for new teachers and newcomers at the school," explained Louise Parent, who has been designated as a mentor. "This year, more than a third of the school staff is new, which is a lot! With this project, the administration aims to meet the particular needs of these teachers and give them additional support to make their integration easier."

When the administration presented the project to Parent and asked her to be a mentor, she accepted without hesitation. "They called on my services because I used to teach at the school. I'm now retired, but I know the school and community well. They also know how I work and that I'm interested in mentoring," she added. "I believe that mentoring is an essential service needed to help new teachers integrate well into the profession. I also think that the more support we give to new teachers, and the quicker we do so, the more we promote success in school. There is a very close connection here."

Parent spends 12 hours a week (spread over three days) at the Pointe-aux-Trembles

secondary school. "Mentoring is done on a volunteer basis, through individual meetings and in complete confidentiality," she said. "We use a personalized approach to better respond to individual needs, but I also give group training for general needs, as I did to prepare new teachers for the first parent-teacher night."

As a mentor, a large part of her role consists in listening carefully to the teachers who confide in her: "Teachers have a lot to say! I think that, most of the time, even if they have a good relationship with the principal and their colleagues, they hesitate to open up. When you're just starting out, you're often afraid of being judged; you want to make a place for yourself and to develop your professional autonomy. You're also starting to define your teaching personality, your own competence and your values. Sometimes, you question your strategies—you think you've made a mistake and you feel overwhelmed. But this is not the side you want others to see! So being able to talk to a mentor, a neutral person, in confidence and without being judged, can be very reassuring."

"As a mentor, I want to share the passion that I had throughout my teaching career."



Parent's biggest surprise was seeing that many new teachers are on the verge of professional burnout just one and a half months into classes. "Many are overwhelmed and discouraged," she admitted. "Already the load is heavier and more diverse today for permanent teachers. It's even more demanding for teachers whose status is precarious, because they often have little or no experience, and have to get to know the school organization and culture; sometimes they have to plan and prepare material for two or three classes at different levels, etc. There is a lot of stress and a lot to learn at the same time."

Of course, teaching is something you continue to learn each day, by doing it. "My role is to help young teachers make connections between the theory, techniques and strategies they learned at school and the human relations aspect of the practice. Because I believe that teacher induction is first and foremost about building the human relationships around us. The stakes are huge, because they involve students, parents, colleagues, peers and the principal. You have to manage everything at once."

To support their integration, Parent believes it is important that new teachers have access to various resource people in the school. "At our school, their colleagues are sympathetic and answer their questions about teaching. Some have even agreed to team up with young teachers. It's really important for newcomers to feel there are people around to help them, to break their isolation. Even so, some new teachers feel that they're asking too much, that they're disturbing their more experienced colleagues who are busy with their own duties. The mentor is someone they can talk to any time, someone who is available just for them."

Many topics are addressed in mentoring sessions: class management, relationships with colleagues and the principal, calling parents, handing out report cards, planning, etc. "Sometimes teachers come to validate their strategies and initiatives, to check that they are appropriate," said Parent. "They want to make sure their perceptions are correct. They have a lot of questions about the culture of the school and the reality in the field. They want to avoid putting their foot in their mouth, because it's always more difficult

to take back something once it's done! They want to share their stress, their anxieties and their questions. Some even wonder if they're in the right place, if they've chosen the right profession, if they're doing too much or not enough. It can get very intense."

According to Parent, these kinds of questions are entirely natural when you're staring out.

"I think young teachers are resourceful and courageous," she said. "They're very careful to be professional, they're concerned about school success, they are open to new ideas, they are involved and don't count their time, they want to create, innovate and perform. They're incredible. At the same time, sometimes they take on too much. And in the schools, we often expect a lot of them."

"As a mentor, I want to share the passion that I had throughout my teaching career," said Parent. "I held a variety of positions in education, which I always enjoyed. I blossomed and fulfilled my potential, and am satisfied. I left with my head high, delighted with my career. Now I want to encourage other teachers to continue their career and to discover their passion for education." ■

"I think that the more support we give to new teachers, and the quicker we do so, the more we promote success in school."

Profile of an open-minded teacher

For more than 20 years, Louise Ménard has been travelling off the beaten path. After teaching for several years at the elementary and preschool levels, she taught for 10 more in a detention centre for adult women. Her interest in young people with difficulties and her insatiable desire to refine her teaching strategies have led her to develop a "culture of the mind."

"In the early 1990s, I was teaching 16- to 18-year-old dropouts at the Le Normand centre of the Commission scolaire des Découvreurs. At the time, the students worked individually, in silence. These were young people who had experienced repeated failures, and many of them had learning difficulties. I wondered how I could get them to share their ways of learning and create a more dynamic class."

These questions led Ménard to become interested in actualizing intellectual potential and in participative management. Interested in furthering this dialogue with her peers, and especially with her students, Ménard continued her education in mental management. She then took an intensive course in the "clarifying interview" method at the Institut National de Recherche Scientifique (INRS) in Paris.

An incredible tool

In the mid-90s, the Ministère de l'Éducation adopted an action plan to foster the integration of information and communication technology in schools. This project enabled Ménard to obtain five computers for her classroom of young dropouts. "I presented a master's thesis that was in fact a project for integrating new technologies into daily teaching practices. I saw this as an incredible tool to create a learning community, a way to promote the value of the process and strategies rather than just the result."

Ménard could now use new technologies as a pretext, a catalyst for educational activities that would allow students to construct their learning. And so there developed a veritable "conception of the collective mind" that consisted in "trying out ways of 'networking' our thought processes and reaching toward high-level knowledge."

The PROTIC adventure

In 1997, Ménard joined the program team of PROTIC (a training program integrating new pedagogical approaches with information and communications technology) at Les Compagnons-de-Cartier secondary school in Sainte-Foy, Québec, where she now teaches Secondary III. "I wanted to find out how far we could go with integrating ITC into learning. So I banished textbooks and notebooks. I forced myself to be creative without traditional tools. When you have everything at your disposal, you are less likely to think about things in new ways, or to try different combinations of the resources available. By acting in this way, I encouraged my students to do the same, that is, to adopt a reflective and rigorous approach to their research and investigation strategies within a group construction project."

Rooted in her learning and teaching experiences, the pedagogical approaches that Ménard prefers are project-based learning and problem solving. "I believe learning is



When it comes to classroom management, Ménard favours a "contractual" model that involves power sharing.

constructed by weaving connections between ideas, concepts and notions. By organizing ourselves into a network, we can build a collective knowledge base. As each student progresses, the group's knowledge evolves along with it, and this in turn enriches each student. This set-up obligates all students to participate; they cannot reach the end of a session without a portfolio or Webfolio. Each student must work to produce something useful to the group as a whole."

How does the class work?

Each student is equipped with a laptop connected to the Internet. Then, the teacher uses an inquiry framework to set them moving towards a goal. "For example, for the project on genetically modified organisms (GMOs), I started by asking them what they considered a quality text. They subsequently identified their respective strengths: strong vocabulary, good verb conjugation skills, etc. Then we went looking for texts on the Internet about issues related to GMOs. Each student contributed to the bank of texts, chose an excerpt and wrote a commentary explaining what they understood from it. The students worked on difficult texts that were not adapted to Secondary III students. But by drawing on the strengths they had identified earlier, they could help and consult one other."

This particular project extended over two months. The students read and selected information on the topic they had chosen, touching on history, geography and science. They wrote an opinion text, which they then revised, corrected and laid out on the page. The result? A beautiful magazine, a true collective work.

Not only does Ménard's method enable her to target both subject-specific and cross-curricular competencies, but it opens the door to a cross-curricular approach. "While we were working on the GMO theme, the biology teacher integrated her material on cells. Even if we don't consult each other on the specifics of our classroom activities, we can still synchronize our teaching."

The teacher as guide

When it comes to classroom management, Ménard favours a "contractual" model that involves power sharing. While this may be demanding, as students become committed to it, the teacher can concentrate on her role as a guide. "I'm there to help them become aware of their cognitive processes, to show them

how to use their errors or obstacles as springboards, and to explain the material they are having trouble grasping."

Her dream?

"I hope that teachers will build their professional identity themselves by taking on the responsibility of thinking, developing and structuring as a collective. Isolation harms teachers. We all face similar challenges. We need to open up the discussion, to open the doors to our classrooms. Schools should be a network, a place where people build together, for teachers as well as students." ❖

Louise Ménard has participated in education reform review sessions with the Ministère de l'Éducation du Québec, the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation, and *Vie pédagogique* magazine. She has presented at conferences hosted by: the Association des professeurs de français (AQPF), the Association des utilisateurs des ordinateurs au primaire et au secondaire (AQUOPS), the Association québécoise du personnel de direction des écoles (AQPDE), and the Société des géographes du secondaire (SGSQ).

Recipient of the 2001 Chapo prize awarded by AQUOPS and of the Prime Minister of Canada's Award for Teaching Excellence (2001), Louise Ménard teaches at Université Laval, in the third year of the bachelor's program for teacher education at the secondary level. She also sits on the committee entrusted with reviewing and validating the revised version of the first four chapters of the Québec Education Program for secondary school.

To find out more, consult Louise Ménard's page on the Web site of PROTIC (Programme de technologie de l'information et des communications):

<www.protic.net/profs/menard/>

In particular, we would like to draw your attention to the curriculum that Louise Ménard has put together based on the twelve competencies of the teacher-training program. It illustrates some of the many ways in which professional development can take place.



So You Want to Teach English

"We all know how powerful teaching can be. It's not just about the curriculum, but how you teach it. It's about the time," says Johanne Mathieu, who teaches English as a Second Language. In a presentation at the 22nd annual SPEAC convention, Mathieu talked about some of the ups and downs of her second-language teaching experience.

Johanne Mathieu has been teaching ESL for almost 13 years. She also participates in teacher training by welcoming student teachers into her classroom. Speaking to a room packed with young teachers and students, she gave her advice in the form of commandments. Here are some of them.

Thou shalt never forget thou art in Québec.

Mathieu adopted the characteristic slouch and intonation of the apathetic teenager.

"Je suis au Québec. Pourquoi j'apprendrais l'anglais?"

"You mean you're never going to go outside Québec?" Mathieu asks.

The teen turns to her friend.

"Je ne comprends pas ce qu'elle dit."

"You don't go on planes?" Mathieu speaks

slowly and mimes an airplane with her hand.

"Yeah. (Shrugs.) Je vais en Floride. Tout le monde parle français en Floride."

Mathieu responds to this attitude by pointing out that no Québec politician would let his or her own son or daughter remain unilingual. She also reminds students that Québec is surrounded by a sea of English. And she notes that Québec anglophones are as distinct as Québec francophones—they have a culture different from that of anglophones elsewhere. "We all live together and we're all in the same boat."

Thou must remember that thy students are teenagers.

Secondary students are in school because they have to be; their first concern is not learning but, rather, their friends, what their peers think of their clothes, etc.

Second-language learning also tests self-esteem. Mathieu again adopted the teenager persona: "Madame, je ne peux pas, je suis poché en anglais." But she doesn't let them get away with this self-defeatist attitude. "If you believe they will learn something, they will," she says. This doesn't mean that all your students will become bilingual—you have to be realistic. But if you trust them, and if you let them know that you trust them, "eventually they will learn."

Thy colleagues will come in many shapes and sizes.

Mathieu recalled how a teacher from a nearby classroom once came knocking on her door because her students were talking too loudly. Meanwhile, Mathieu was overjoyed that her students were making an effort to talk English at all.

"Your classes are going to be noisy," she said. "Make sure everybody understands this."

She suggests working with the French teacher to see how he or she teaches certain types of texts.

"Because when you get in front of a class, the kids will recognize your passion and will love you for it. If you're interested in them, they will connect with you."

"You're both teaching languages," she explains. Using the same structures and terminology can provide continuity for the students.

Mathieu also warns that some colleagues may cling to old-school techniques, or be simply waiting for their pension. "Luckily, others will be highly motivated and willing to try new things."

Thy students' parents still believe in miracles.

Here Mathieu imitated a parent: "By the end of the year, my child will be able to speak fluently, right?" Even if parents aren't bilingual themselves, they realize the importance of being bilingual. However, this doesn't mean they watch English television at home; nor will it prevent them from complaining about the price of a workbook.

Thy teaching will be based on second-language learning.

"Some people believe that, just because they can speak English, they can teach it. It's not true. You have to know how somebody learns a language if you want to see your students' eyes light up." She always explains the process of language learning to her students—how they will learn and what they can expect. Teachers should also be aware that, for some students, English is their third language.

Thy dictionary will do the speaking.

"Madame, comment on dit ça, vous savez..."

"D-i-c-t-i-o-n-a-r-y."

"Mais ça ne veut pas dire... Ah."

A few minutes later:

"Madame, je ne le trouve pas."

"Show me where you are looking for it."

Mathieu goes over and discovers the student is looking in the wrong section of the dictionary.

"Using the dictionary is an important skill they have to learn," she emphasizes.

Thou shalt speak English in class.

Mathieu looked her audience straight in the eyes. "We all speak English in class all the time, right? We never use French, right?"

She uses English in the classroom as much as possible. But when, after repetition and hand puppetry, her students still don't understand something, she will say it in French. Her view: if a student doesn't understand the task, there's no point to the lesson. "We cannot leave a kid stranded."

Thou shalt love thy job or be ready to do something else.

"The moment you go into a classroom and the students feel you don't want to be there, you may as well ask them to hit you with

a baseball bat." She recommends always having a plan B, whether it's writing the great Canadian novel, teaching another subject or raising cattle. "It's a tiring job. When you become an English teacher, just try going into a bookstore without slowing down as you pass the young adult section."

People envy teachers for their two months' vacation, but she doesn't see it that way. "It's one month sick leave, two weeks vacation, and two weeks leading into September when you're thinking about what you're going to do for the coming year."

Teaching is a job, but it's also a calling, she says. "That's what makes it thrilling. Because when you get in front of a class, the kids will recognize your passion and will love you for it. If you're interested in them, they will connect with you." ☛



Mathieu, Mathieu, English as a Second Language teacher

"Teaching is a job, but it's also a calling. That's what makes it thrilling."

SPEAQ, the Société pour la promotion de l'enseignement de l'anglais, langue seconde, au Québec, held its 32nd annual convention on Nov. 4-6, 2004 in Québec City. Watch for more coverage of this event in our April issue.

By Pascale Sauvé

Pilot Schools

Learning Communities

In September 2003, fifteen pilot schools began field-testing the Québec Education Program in Secondary Cycle One.

They were closely followed by a team mandated to evaluate implementation of the program in various school environments in Québec. After one year of field-testing, several findings have emerged.

"This study sought to answer two key questions," explained Jean-François Giguère, field-testing coordinator, who came to present these findings at November's provincial meeting on the education reform. "We wanted to know if school organization and staff training had an impact on the application of the QEP, and if so, how. We also wanted to find out if the QEP had an effect on student motivation and involvement, and if so, in what way."

A total of 15 schools, 219 teachers and 2 100 students in Secondary Cycle One participated in field-testing the program in 2003-2004. A team made up of people from the DGJF (Direction générale de la formation des jeunes) and the DRSI (Direction de la recherche, des statistiques et des indicateurs) analyzed the situation. They used questionnaires that had been submitted to administrators, teachers and students; descriptions of learning and evaluation situations used in class and related student work; and information gathered on school organization, on professional development and in focus groups. "Schools determined their own school organization and professional development plans. We did not impose any model," Giguère noted. "The data therefore reflects the choices made by the schools themselves."

Initial findings

In light of this analysis, how do teachers view the application of the QEP? "Most say they are motivated to apply the program," Giguère summarized. "They say they understand the program fairly well and adhere to its principles. However, they are not entirely comfortable in applying it. Over the course of the year, however, there was significant progress and their comfort level increased over time."

Overall, teachers think the QEP benefits students more than did previous programs. They report that students are more motivated, more involved in their learning, and more capable of applying and mobilizing their knowledge.

The data collected on the atmosphere within the school teams shows that, at the end of the first year of applying the QEP, teachers felt there was less mutual aid and less of a common vision as compared to the start of the year. "We can hypothesize that, as long as the program's vision remains theoretical, there is a certain consensus; but when teachers begin trying things out in the classroom, different views begin to appear," said Giguère.

The large majority of teachers say their requests and needs for training were adequately met by their school or school board. They also say they met a few times during the year with people designated by their school to help them reflect on their teaching practices and on their learning and evaluation situations. Some obtained help from education consultants, but a large number were supported and guided by their principal and by some of their colleagues.

Teachers also state that there is more collaboration. "Our findings show that there was teacher collaboration in the first year, but mostly among colleagues teaching the same subjects and for the same year," said Giguère. "They rarely worked as a cycle team." Most met on pedagogical



Jean-François Giguère, field-testing coordinator

days, while some used periods outside of class, or met at lunch hour or in the evening, to talk to their colleagues. The most common topic was planning learning and evaluation situations. They also discussed ideas on applying the QEP and, sometimes, the evaluation of learning.

Do training, guidance and collaboration make a difference? "We were pleasantly surprised," said Giguère. "From the very first year, we see significant differences in the perceptions of teachers and schools who enjoyed more training, guidance and collaboration than others." The study shows that teachers who received the most training and guidance, and who collaborated the most with each other, have more positive perceptions of the change in teaching practices, the QEP, changes in the classroom and school atmosphere, the team atmosphere, the program's impact on students who are not at risk, learning situations and evaluation as support for learning.

Models of school organization

In the choices made by the pilot schools, two models of school organization predominated: six schools opted for a model using "families," and three chose the homeroom system. Six others did not make any changes to their organizational model. "In the family model, teachers are responsible for a few groups of students, provide personalized follow-up of their students and meet at times planned into the schedule," Giguère explained. "In the homeroom system, the teachers spend a lot of time with the students of one group (in some models). In addition to their classes, they have periods for providing guidance and supervision to students."

"When we compare the schools that set up a family or homeroom system to those that did not, we see a whole set of positive perceptions among teachers and, what's more, among students," said Giguère. These teachers have a more positive view of the changes in teaching practices, the QEP, the change of atmosphere in the classroom and in the school, the team atmosphere, the impact of the QEP on students who are not at risk, learning situations, evaluation as support for learning, the priority given to subject-specific competencies in class and the time devoted to the development of competencies in a subject.

Students, meanwhile, show more involvement in the class group; they carry out more innovative activities in class, which enable them to make links between the subjects and their lives outside of school, to make decisions about their school work and to consult several sources of information; they have more opportunities to reflect on their work in class; they find school and school tasks more appealing; and they have a greater understanding of the purpose of their learning.

Learning and evaluation situations

"We analyzed some 200 learning and evaluation situations, and made some very pleasing findings," said Giguère. "First of all, in all the situations, teachers took care to make sure the students were active. There was a real desire to develop the competencies prescribed in the QEP, and in most cases the work expected of students corresponded to the competency targeted. In addition, teachers took the initiative of creating observation checklists for evaluation."

These first trials are very positive. There are some points to improve, however. "We need to deepen the understanding of the competencies and give greater consideration to their key features. For each learning and evaluation situation, the teacher has to make sure students gain awareness with respect to the broad area of learning targeted. This means the teacher must schedule time into the learning situation to ask the students questions to generate this awareness. As well, for the first year of implementing the QEP, it would be preferable to target fewer cross-curricular competencies. This will make it easier for the teacher to support and observe students as they develop and apply these competencies," said Giguère.

Conclusions

What should we take from this first year of field-testing? "We see that integration of the QEP comes through applying it," said Giguère. "Of course people still need to read and analyze the program to understand it, but it is through action that they will truly make it their own. We can also say that, the more training people have, the more comfortable they are applying the QEP. This study also shows that collaboration is indeed possible in schools. The families and the homeroom system are not one-size-fits-all models, but they can be good sources of inspiration: each school must figure out what is essential and what will work for its own staff and students. Finally, for the creation of learning situations, it is important to provide guidance to teachers throughout the process: to create the situation, to make adjustments along the way, and to evaluate it once it is done." ■

THE QUIT TO WIN! CHALLENGE IS BACK!

From January 1 to February 28, 2005, all smokers who want to quit can register for the *Quit to Win! Challenge*—a great way to get rid of those cigarettes for good.

Challenge

Quit to Win!

Actor Bernard Fortin, spokesperson for the Challenge and an ex-smoker himself, is proud to be a part of this campaign. In the last five years, the Challenge has reached some 156 000 smokers, of which 25 000 were aged 18 to 24. "Built on the principles of respect and mutual help, the Challenge is suitable for all types of smokers, whatever their age. In addition, participants are eligible to win prizes. It's worth your while!"

Big risks often taken too lightly

The proportion of smokers in the 20-24 age bracket in Québec stands at 36%, in comparison to 25% for the population as a whole. The vast majority (77%) start smoking before they are 18. That's why it's so important to begin prevention as early as possible; school is the perfect place to do so.

This year, participants can enter from January 1 to February 28, 2005, by going to www.defitabac.qc.ca or by filling out one of the entry forms available in local weekly newspapers, at Jean Coutu stores, and at Quit Smoking Centres. For more information about the Challenge, call the J'ARRETE hotline at: 1 888 853-6666.

CRIRES SURVEY

In fall 2004, the Centre de recherche et d'intervention sur la réussite scolaire (CRIRES) announced the results of a survey it conducted among school principals, teachers, non-teaching professionals and parents.

Carried out as part of a research study, this survey sought to understand and evaluate the progress of the various stages of the curriculum reform

in elementary school. It looked at the perceptions of school personnel and assessed the quality of the implementation of the QEP as well as its perceived effects so far.

To find out more about the survey, consult the report on the CRIRES Web site, at www.ulaval.ca/crires.

Happy Teacher Appreciation Week!

SCHOOLSAPES

WORKING TOGETHER TO INSTRUCT, SOCIALIZE AND PROVIDE QUALIFICATIONS

Schoolscapes is under the responsibility of the Secteur de l'éducation préscolaire, de l'enseignement primaire et secondaire

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